

# **State Public Health Officials Announce 2004 West Nile Virus Protocol**

RALEIGH— North Carolina public health officials today announced the 2004 West Nile virus protocol, which ends routine bird testing and sets up a consistent policy for reporting new human cases.

“Bird testing was very useful in the early years of this disease, so we could see how it was spreading across the state. Without the extensive bird testing since 2000, we would not have been able to track the virus,” said State Health Director Leah Devlin. “But, now we know that West Nile virus is here to stay in North Carolina. We want to focus our efforts on education and prevention.

“The message on West Nile Virus is clear. The disease is a possibility anywhere in the state, and you should take precautions to protect yourself and your family,” said Devlin. “Prevent mosquito bites with the application of DEET insect repellent. You can make your home a less welcoming spot for mosquitoes by removing or preventing standing water, especially in small containers.”

The protocol for reporting West Nile cases will include reporting consistent information about all human cases. The following information will be reported on each human case: county of residency, sex, age range and condition.

Because the disease is becoming more commonplace, the NC Department of Health and Human Services will issue a news release about the first human case, but will not issue news releases on additional cases. But, the information will be posted on the department’s web site at <http://www.dhhs.state.nc.us/>. Additional information and maps will be posted at: <http://www.deh.enr.state.nc.us/phpm/index.html>. Reporters wishing to be notified when new cases are posted will receive notification by email. Media outlets already on the department’s email list will automatically receive notification. Anyone wishing to add an address to that list can do so by emailing [Debbie.Crane@ncmail.net](mailto:Debbie.Crane@ncmail.net).

West Nile Virus was first identified in a Chatham County bird in October 2000. The first human case was identified in a Vance County man in September 2002. Last year the virus was identified in birds, horses or humans in 92 North Carolina counties. Twenty-two North Carolinians were infected in state with the virus in 2003, and two of them died.